

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A gaming device comprising:

a plurality of reels;

a plurality of symbols on said reels, wherein at least two of said symbols are flanking symbols, at least one of said symbols is a convertible symbol, and at least one of said symbols is a non-convertible symbol; and

a processor operable configured to: cause ~~the~~ a generation of at least one of said symbols on each of the reels, change said convertible symbol to one of said flanking symbols if said convertible symbol is generated on an active payline associated with one of said reels which is directly between two flanking symbols generated on said active payline associated with two of said reels, display any said change to a player, and provide the player an award based on any winning combination of symbols on the reels, wherein if said non-convertible symbol is generated on said active payline associated with one of said reels which is directly between two flanking symbols generated on said active payline associated with two of said reels, said non-convertible symbol does not change to one of said flanking symbols.

Claim 2 (original): The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein a plurality of said symbols are convertible.

Claim 3 (original): The gaming device of Claim 2, wherein at least one of said flanking symbols is associated with one of said convertible symbols.

Claim 4 (currently amended): The gaming device of Claim 3, wherein said processor is ~~operable~~ configured to cause said generated convertible symbol to change to said associated flanking symbol if said convertible symbol is between at least one of said associated flanking symbols.

Claim 5 (currently amended): The gaming device of Claim 2, wherein said processor is ~~operable~~ configured to change a plurality of said convertible symbols if said convertible symbols are generated on a plurality of said reels and said convertible symbols are each between two flanking symbols.

Claim 6 (original): The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein a plurality of said symbols are non-convertible.

Claim 7 (original): The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein a plurality of said symbols are flanking symbols.

Claim 8 (currently amended): A gaming device comprising:

- a primary game operable upon a wager by a player;
- a plurality of reels in said primary game;
- a plurality of symbols on said reels, wherein said plurality of symbols include at least four symbols which are each adapted to function as a flanking symbol or as a convertible symbol, wherein upon a first play of the primary game, two of said symbols function as flanking symbols and one of said symbols functions as the convertible symbol and upon a second play of the primary game, said convertible symbol of said first play of the primary game functions as the flanking symbol and one of said flanking symbols of said first play of the primary game functions as the convertible symbol; and
- a processor ~~operable~~ configured for each play of the primary game to: cause the ~~a~~ generation of at least one of said symbols on each of the reels, change each convertible symbol to one of said flanking symbols if said convertible symbol is generated on an active payline associated with one of said reels which is directly between two flanking symbols generated on said active payline associated with two of said reels, display any of said changes to the player and provide the player an award based on any winning combination of symbols on the reels.

Claim 9 (currently amended): A gaming device comprising:
a plurality of reels;
a plurality of symbols on said reels, wherein one or more of said symbols are flanking symbols, convertible symbols, flanking/convertible symbols or non-convertible symbols;
a display device; and
a processor ~~operable~~ configured to cause ~~the~~ a generation of at least one of said symbols on each of the reels, designate said flanking/convertible symbol as one of said flanking symbols or as one of said convertible symbols if said flanking/convertible symbol is generated on an active payline associated with one of said reels, ~~changing~~ change said convertible symbol to one of said flanking symbols if said generated convertible symbol is directly between two flanking symbols generated on said active payline associated with two of said reels, display any said change to a player, and provide the player an award based on any winning combination of symbols on the reels, wherein if said non-convertible symbol is generated on said active payline associated with one of said reels which is directly between two flanking symbols generated on said active payline associated with two of said reels, said non-convertible symbol does not change to one of said flanking symbols.

Claim 10 (currently amended): The gaming device of Claim 9, wherein the processor is configured to enables the player to designate said flanking/convertible symbol as a flanking symbol, a convertible symbol or both.

Claim 11 (currently amended): A gaming device comprising:

a plurality of reels;

a plurality of symbols on said reels, wherein at least two of said symbols are flanking symbols, at least one of said symbols is a convertible symbol, at least one of said symbols is a non-convertible symbol and at least one of said symbols is a flanking/convertible symbol wherein said flanking/convertible symbol is adapted to be designated as either a flanking symbol, a convertible symbol or both; and

a processor ~~operable~~ configured to:

(a) cause ~~the~~ a generation of at least one of said symbols on each of the reels;

(b) designate said flanking/convertible symbol as one of said flanking symbols or as one of said convertible symbols if said flanking/convertible symbol is generated on an active payline associated with one of said reels;

(c) change said designated convertible symbol to one of said flanking symbols if said flanking/convertible symbol is designated as one of said convertible symbols and said designated convertible symbol is directly between two flanking symbols generated on said active payline associated with two adjacent reels;

(d) change said convertible symbol to one of said flanking symbols if said flanking/convertible symbol is designated as a flanking symbol and said convertible symbol is directly between said designated flanking symbol and one of said flanking symbols on said active payline associated with two adjacent reels;

(e) do not change said non-convertible to one of said flanking symbols if said non-convertible symbol is generated on said active payline associated with one of said reels which is directly between two of said flanking symbols generated on said active payline associated with two of said reels;

(f) change said convertible symbol to one of said flanking symbols if said convertible symbol is directly between two flanking symbols generated on said active payline associated with two adjacent reels;

(g) display any said changes to a player; and

(h) provide the player an award based on any winning combination of symbols on the reels.

Claim 12 (currently amended): The gaming device of Claim 11, wherein the processor is configured to enables the player to designate said flanking/convertible symbol as a flanking symbol, a convertible symbol or both.

Claim 13 (original): The gaming device of Claim 11, wherein a plurality of said symbols are convertible.

Claim 14 (original): The gaming device of Claim 11, wherein a plurality of said symbols are non-convertible.

Claim 15 (original): The gaming device of Claim 11, wherein a plurality of said symbols are flanking symbols.

Claim 16 (currently amended): A gaming device comprising:

a plurality of reels;

a plurality of symbols on said reels, wherein at least two of said symbols are flanking symbols, at least one of said symbols is a convertible symbol and at least one of said symbols is a non-convertible symbol; and

a processor ~~operable~~ configured to cause the ~~a~~ generation of at least one of said symbols on each of the reels, change said convertible symbol to one of said flanking symbols if one of said flanking symbols is generated on an active payline associated with a first of said reels, said convertible symbol is generated on said active payline associated with a second of said reels and one of said flanking symbols is generated on said active payline associated with a third of said reels reel wherein said second reel is directly between said first and third reels, display any said change to a player, and provide the player an award based on any winning combination of symbols on the reels, wherein if said non-convertible symbol is generated on said active payline associated with one of said reels which is directly between two flanking symbols generated on said active payline associated with two of said reels, said non-convertible symbol does not change to one of said flanking symbols.

Claim 17 (original): The gaming device of Claim 16, wherein a plurality of said symbols are convertible.

Claim 18 (original): The gaming device of Claim 16, wherein a plurality of said symbols are non-convertible.

Claim 19 (original): The gaming device of Claim 16, wherein a plurality of said symbols are flanking symbols.

Claim 20 (currently amended): A gaming device comprising:

a plurality of reels;

a plurality of symbols on said reels, wherein at least two of said symbols are flanking symbols, a plurality of said symbols are convertible symbols and at least one of said symbols is a non-convertible symbol; and

a processor ~~operable~~ configured to cause ~~the~~ a generation of at least one of said symbols on each of the reels, change at least one of said convertible symbols to one of said flanking symbols if one of said flanking symbols is generated on an active payline associated with a first of said reels, said convertible symbol is generated on said active payline associated with a second of said reels, said convertible symbol is generated on said active payline associated with a third of said reels and one of said flanking symbols is generated on said active payline associated with a fourth of said reels wherein said second reel and said third reel are directly between said first and fourth reels, display any said change to a player, and provide the player an award based on any winning combination of symbols on the reels, wherein if said non-convertible symbol is generated on said active payline associated with one of said reels which is directly between two flanking symbols generated on said active payline associated with two of said reels, said non-convertible symbol does not change to one of said flanking symbols.

Claim 21 (original): The gaming device of Claim 20, wherein a plurality of said symbols are non-convertible.

Claim 22 (original): The gaming device of Claim 20, wherein a plurality of said symbols are flanking symbols.

Claim 23 (original): The gaming device of Claim 20, wherein said convertible symbols on said second reel and said third reel are different symbols.

Claims 24 and 25 (cancelled).

Claim 26 (currently amended): A gaming device comprising:

a plurality of reels;

a plurality of symbols on said reels, wherein at least two of said symbols are flanking symbols, at least one of said symbols is a convertible symbol, and at least one of said symbols is a non-convertible symbol; and

a processor operable configured to cause ~~the~~ a generation of at least one of said symbols on each of the reels wherein the number of generated flanking symbols is based on the wager by ~~the~~ a player, change said convertible symbol to one of said flanking symbols if said convertible symbol is generated on an active payline associated with one of said reels directly between two flanking symbols generated on said active payline associated with two of said reels, display any said change to ~~a~~ the player and provide the player an award based on any winning combination of symbols on the reels, wherein if said non-convertible symbol is generated on said active payline associated with one of said reels which is directly between two flanking symbols generated on said active payline associated with two of said reels, said non-convertible symbol does not change to one of said flanking symbols.

Claims 27 to 36 (cancelled).

Claim 37 (previously presented): A method of operating a gaming device, said method comprising the steps of:

- (a) generating a flanking symbol on an active payline associated with a first reel, a flanking/convertible symbol on the active payline associated with a second reel, a flanking/convertible symbol on the active payline associated with a third reel, a flanking/convertible symbol on the active payline associated with a fourth reel, a flanking symbol on the active payline associated with a fifth reel;
- (b) designating the flanking/convertible symbols on the second and fourth reel as flanking symbols and said flanking/convertible symbol on the third reel as a convertible symbol;
- (c) changing said designated convertible symbol on the third reel to one of said flanking symbols if said flanking/convertible symbols on the second and fourth reel are designated as flanking symbols and said flanking/convertible symbol on the third reel is designated as a convertible symbol;
- (d) displaying any said change to a player;
- (e) providing the player any award based on any winning combination of said displayed symbols on the active payline associated with the reels;
- (f) designating the flanking/convertible symbols on the second, third and fourth reels as convertible symbols;
- (g) changing said designated convertible symbols on the second, third and fourth reels to one of said flanking symbols;
- (h) displaying any said change to the player; and
- (i) providing the player any award based on any winning combination of said displayed symbols on the active payline associated with the reels.

Claim 38 (original): The method of Claim 37, wherein the player is enabled to designate said flanking/convertible symbols on the second and fourth reel as flanking symbols and said flanking/convertible symbol on the third reel as a convertible symbol.

Claim 39 (original): The method of Claim 37, wherein the player is enabled to designate the flanking/convertible symbols on the second, third and fourth reels as convertible symbols.

Claim 40 (original): The method of Claim 37, wherein the player is enabled to designate said flanking/convertible symbols on the second and fourth reel as flanking symbols and said flanking/convertible symbol on the third reel as a convertible symbol and subsequently to designate the flanking/convertible symbols on the second, third and fourth reels as convertible symbols.

Claim 41 (original): The method of Claim 37, which is provided to the player through a data network.

Claim 42 (original): The method of Claim 41, wherein the data network is an internet.

Claims 43 to 45 (cancelled).

Claim 46 (previously presented): A method of operating a gaming device, said method comprising the steps of:

(a) generating a plurality of symbols on an active payline associated with a plurality of reels for one game play, wherein said plurality of symbols include at least four symbols which are each adapted to function as a flanking symbol or as a convertible symbol, wherein two of said symbols function as flanking symbols and one of said symbols functions as said convertible symbol;

(b) changing said convertible symbol to one of said flanking symbols if said generated convertible symbol is directly between two generated flanking symbols;

(c) displaying any said change to a player;

(d) providing the player an award based on any winning combination of symbols on the reels; and

(e) repeating steps (a) to (d) for a plurality of game plays, wherein for at least one subsequent game play, any convertible symbol of said previous game play which was not directly between two generated flanking symbols is adapted to function as said flanking symbol and one of said flanking symbols of said previous game play is adapted to function as said convertible symbol.

Claim 47 (original): The method of Claim 46, which is provided to the player through a data network.

Claim 48 (original): The method of Claim 47, wherein the data network is an internet.